

One Barnsley

In conjunction with

Barnsley Black and Ethnic Minority Initiative (BBEMI)

Public Services - Targeting Barnsley's BME Community

Held on 20th November 2006

Conference Report



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Summary

A number of area conferences were being held in neighbourhoods across Barnsley in late 2006. These were designed to engage the community and enable them to discuss issues in their area. This information would then be used to help improve the quality of services being delivered there. In order complement this, it was decided to hold an event specifically to engage the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents of Barnsley to help improve the quality of services to their community.

This report comes as direct result of holding such an event on the 20th November 2006.

The first of its kind in Barnsley, it was based around facilitated workshops and offered an opportunity to raise issues, problems concerns about the services residents received in Barnsley specifically due to them being part of then BME community.

These were then prioritised and form the basis of recommendation contained within this report.

There are 13 recommendations in this report which start on page 18. They range from providing a forum for the BME community to raise policing issues to providing more culturally aware leisure services.

The conference was well received both by the BME community and services, but it was just the start of this process.

BBEMI is committed to working with officers and agencies to prioritise and implement as many of the recommendations as possible. Each of these interventions will help to overcome some of the issues the BME community faces, improve the quality of services they receive and ultimately improve their quality of life.

1. Background

A fundamental review of the Barnsley Community Plan in 2005 suggested a need to strengthen its spatial dimension. This means assessing the differences between areas in Barnsley, both by geographical community (where people live) and community of interest (people who share a common identity, or share the same experiences or concerns).

As part of reviewed Neighbourhood Governance arrangements, the Local Authority with partners agreed to organise a series of Area Conferences. Along with other consultation mechanisms, these are designed to feed the views of the community in to the planning process of statutory organisations such as the Council or Police on an annual basis. This information will help to improve services by enabling the delivery to be more appropriate to the needs of the community.

As the name suggests these Area Conferences are intended to gain information in each of the 9 forum areas

and in order to focus on the specific needs of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community, a conference for the BME community was arranged.

This conference organised by One Barnsley, the Local Strategic Partnership and BBEMI (Barnsley Black and Ethnic Minority Initiative) was arranged for people to raise issues, concerns and problems in an open forum. The event termed Public Services - Targeting Barnsley's BME Community", took place on the 20th November 2006.

This document provides an account of the conference and presents its findings along with recommendations for action.

2. The Event

The event held at Shaw Lane Community Sports Club followed the format below.

1. Welcome and Opening

Trenton Wiggan, Executive Director of BBEMI, welcomed everyone and set the scene for the event. He referred to the Neighbourhood Governance arrangements in Barnsley and the place that this event had alongside the conferences in the 9 forum areas.

Joe Micheli, BMBC's Principal Social Inclusion Officer, then spoke about the fundamental review of the Community Plan and the need to improve its spatial element. He spoke about the event also responding to the Central Government double devolution agenda as laid down in the recent Government white paper.

2. The Situation in Barnsley

Debbie Platt, Neighbourhood Research Officer of BMBC's Community Planning Department and part of the One Barnsley Secretariat delivered a short presentation on the current situation in Barnsley using statistics collected on themes of Health, Community Safety, Housing, Employment and Education. The statistics showed progress in all areas, with some having greater rates of improvement than others. Debbie explained that whilst these statistics are at a Barnsley wide level they are available at a much smaller geographical level. This more detailed level of information could then show disparities within Barnsley.

Debbie highlighted some statistics specific to the BME community – population estimates and the percentage of pupils in schools who are from the BME community. This highlighted the lack of statistics collected on the BME community and stressed the need to collect more soft data, or perception based evidence, from an event such as this, to complement the hard data available. The last slide which showed the percentage of people who felt that they could influence decisions, was generally quite

low; this was one of the main reasons for holding this conference – to provide people from the BME community with a forum to help influence decisions about services and service delivery.

3. Introduction to Workshops

Peter Mirfin, Community Planning Officer of BMBC's Community Planning Department introduced the workshops. These were based around 5 themes.

A – Education

B – Health and Well Being

C – Crime, Community Safety and Policing

D – Housing and the Environment

E – Jobs, Employment and the Economy

Each theme was facilitated by a member of the Community Planning / One Barnsley team and supported by a member of BBEMI's staff.

Peter then suggested; and participants agreed, to some ground rules for the workshops in order to ensure all attendees had the opportunity to contribute.

4. Workshops

Each workshop contained roughly the same amount of individuals and followed the following format.

1. Ice breaker – in order for people in each group to get to know their neighbour they were asked to chat to the person that they were sat next to and ask:-
 - What is their name?
 - Where do they live?
 - Why are they at the event?

People were then asked to feedback the information they had gained from their partner to the wider group.

2. Sharing issues - Discussing with the person next to them, people were asked to write down on Post-Its notes any issues which they, being a member of Barnsley's BME community, may have in relation to their workshop's theme. These were then placed on a flip chart. Facilitators were on hand to stimulate and oversee the discussions.
3. Prioritising the issues – the group discussed all the issues put on Post-Its, and the facilitators grouped these wherever possible. Through general consensus within each workshop, participants came up with their top three areas of issues/concerns/problems

5. *Feedback from Workshops and Next Steps*

Facilitators fed back from the workshops in the conference's plenary and comments were added from the floor. It was agreed that the findings from the conference be compiled into a conference report which would feed into the Council's

Corporate Equality Group, Cabinet and into One Barnsley. It would also be disseminated to BBEMI members and other interested parties with a summary available in appropriate languages.

A suggestion was made to hold another gathering in approximately 6 months to update on progress.

Refreshments followed, which offered an opportunity for attendees to discuss issues further and add to the notes taken in each workshop.

3. The Findings

Education

The education workshop discussed the subject taking into account a variety of age ranges from pre- school to adult education, and the continuum from education to sustainable employment.

Common in every element of the discussion was the language barrier and the need for more accessible translation interpretation services.

The workshop arrived at three overall priorities

1. Inclusion in schools

People in the workshop said:

- The need to tackle racism and bullying in schools with a visible discipline procedure for perpetrators and support mechanisms for victims

- Such procedures should be regularly visited to ensure they remain current and effective,
- The need for more BME culture related education for all students and teachers,
- Increased sensitivity towards BME cultural issues and close working between all communities.

Recommendation – to ensure robust procedures are in place to deal with racist bullying and ensure these are well communicated

2. Improved Support Infrastructure for the BME Community

People in the workshop said:

- We need after school homework support for students of other languages,
- Accessible in the first language of the community,
- Parents think there is not enough homework to stretch and challenge their children, to ensure they maximise their potential,

- Adult learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of the community, delivered in' and where appropriate, by the BME the community,
- More signposting and information to express the educational and employment opportunities available in Barnsley.

Recommendation - To provide after school study support for the BME Community at appropriate venues

3. Transition from Education to Employment

In the discussion there was a call for more support in the transition from education to employment including the following;

People in the workshop said:

- More support in further and higher education,
- Clear progression routes and skills matching,
- Education and information on sustainable employment opportunities,
- Targeted BME Positive Action programmes

- Better initial assessments to ensure information on employment opportunities are conveyed.

Recommendation - Provide advice and guidance more adequately tailored to the needs of the BME community to enable them to access jobs and training.

Health and Well Being

Under the subject of Health and Well Being, much more than merely Health care was discussed. There are many factors which contribute to a healthy person in body and mind, including leisure.

Again discussion brought out common themes which included

- Language Barriers - written information, translation and interpretation services are poor across the board.
- The need for a greater amount of Cultural Awareness training – individuals and organisations are often unsure how to communicate or work with different groups.

1. Issues accessing Health Care Services

People in the workshop said:

- Expressing views can often be difficult, there is a need for good translation & interpretation services

but the funding is too restricted for translators to travel.

- More understanding of cultural beliefs and values
- Social Care – problems when staff move on – new staff need to be familiarised with cultural values. More cultural awareness training is required across the board along with an increase in BME members of staff.
- Mental health care is a very sensitive area and could become extremely difficult if workers are not aware of the needs of BME clientele. If family members have to get involved with translation & interpretation, sensitive issues can be problematic.
- Waiting a long time for services – sometimes this is because the service does not understand needs
- There is a feeling of guilt using the doctors time because the translation & interpretation takes longer – receptionists should allocate an extra 5 or 10 minutes for the appointment.
- There is the need for an increased amount of information in community languages or even a dedicated community worker or health advocate,

who would be known and trusted by the BME community.

Recommendation - Improve the accessibility of health service by employing an intermediary BME lay health worker.

2. Barriers accessing leisure services

People in the workshop said:

- More support required in the Community - holiday leisure activities etc. BME people need to feel confident about the organisation running the event/s.
- Cultural issues – such as male life guards being on duty or large windows for the public to view when particular BME women wish to hold a swimming activity, is inappropriate. This and other concerns could be overcome by more ‘all women’ groups.
- Libraries, including mobile ones, have very limited, if any, books in community languages.

- Leisure facilities can be expensive and there is not enough information about services and discounts
- Need better local facilities – there are safety concerns about provision within existing facilities of appropriate activities.

Recommendation - Improve use of Leisure facilities by arranging more culturally aware events.

3. Accessibility of services utilising transport

People in the workshop said:

- Accessing leisure can be expensive; many cultural activities such as Indian cinema are only in Sheffield.
- People don't have the information about public transport.
- People don't feel confident using taxis due to language barriers and don't feel confident in the service
- People don't feel safe using public transport.

Recommendation - Improve accessibility by encouraging transport services tailored to the needs of the BME community.

Crime, Community Safety and Policing

The workshop on Crime, Community Safety and Policing was well attended and feedback suggested that the participants of this workshop wanted to see the BME community building a positive relationship with the wider community, especially in light of negative stereotyping in the media.

Again common issues around communication were brought to the fore. The issues prioritised were –

1. A more effective forum with the police needed

People in the workshop said:

- We need to educate the Police and decision-making bodies about the communities and their culture along with the BME community being provided with information to better understand why the Police do certain things in a particular way.
- More community workshops needed with Police and also with BMBC and Safer & Stronger Community Partnership.

- BME Communities are scattered all over the borough so you cannot target specific areas.
- BME community liaison worker who can work more closely with the community is needed.

2. Issues at an area level not filtering into existing area arrangements

People in the workshop said:

- Racism – how is it being dealt with in Barnsley (e.g. Football club?)?
- We need more community laws to help keep the peace.
- We think that there is poor drugs policing in town centre.
- We need more Community Police specifically in the town centre and generally across the borough.

Recommendation - Provide a consultative Crime and Community Safety forum for the BME community

3. The Impact of media in inciting racism

People in the workshop said:

- Some media has an impact in inciting racism which needs to be dealt with.

Recommendation – All agencies to work with local media to share good news stories and build positive relationship

Housing and the Environment

The workshop on Housing and the Environment discussed both private and social housing throughout the borough. Again, some issues of language barriers when accessing services around housing and the environment were apparent.

The workshop came up with three priority issues

1. Access to affordable housing for all people, including the BME community

People in the workshop said:

- Council Houses are being pulled down and not being replaced, this compounds the problem
- Affordable housing in places such as Penistone/Cawthorne has criteria which does not create diverse communities.

2. Accessibility of existing housing is really important for creating mixed healthy communities.

People in the workshop said:

- Accessibility of affordable and available homes is a particular problem.
- Need good access from homes to central Barnsley and the BME community – for example to BBEMI.

3. The need for BME representation on Housing decision making bodies at the highest level, e.g. Berneslai Homes.

People in the workshop said:

- Greater representation is needed from user groups such as the BME community on decision-making boards
- Without BME communities represented at a higher level, how can views be taken into account?

Other issues included:

- Need involvement of young people to tackle existing issues such as anti social behaviour
- There are inequalities in council housing and council/gypsy traveller sites.

- Translation & interpretation e.g. about how to use wheelie bins so that collection times and usage is easily understood.

Recommendation – To increase representation on Housing Boards

Jobs, Employment and the Economy

The Jobs, Employment and the Economy workshop had perhaps the most difficult task to identify issues which were specific to the BME community,

Many of the common issues were compounded by issues similar to those identified above – language barriers and the need for written and spoken information in community languages.

The three priority issues identified by this workshop were as follows:

1. Combating basic language barriers

People in the workshop said:

- Job Centres are needed in the community – in neighbourhoods, but must also provide appropriate services for communities of interest.
- Positive Action programmes for the BME community to be better represented in BMBC and

other major institutions – even simplified recruitment application/ information packs

- Less computer based job search, more paper and people based with information available in appropriate languages.

2. Ensuring that skills and training are firmly linked with real jobs that are available to the local workforce.

People in the workshop said:

- Bring back apprenticeships for young people
- Make vocational skills and training more attractive – offer skills linked to better paid jobs
- More courses to re-skill older people for available jobs
- Encourage more investment into Barnsley, make sure its appropriate for people's skills
- Invest in BME people to make Barnsley's economy better, not just bricks and mortar

3. Ensuring that people who are skilled are retained in Barnsley and are not taking their skills elsewhere.

People in the workshop said:

- We need to rethink how to retain skilled people in Barnsley
- Ring fence local jobs for local people
- Link training locally to jobs
- Link inward investment to local skills and training

Recommendation - To provide advice and guidance which is more adequately tailored to the needs of the BME community to enable them to access jobs and training.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

With the recently revised Neighbourhood Governance arrangements in Barnsley this was the first event of its type. In general, the audience felt that focus groups such as this were beneficial and they welcomed the opportunity to be consulted and involved. However, there were some reservations about what action would result from this. It is therefore imperative that some positive conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the above information. These recommendations must result in action which will ultimately enable service providers to deliver more adequately to the needs of Barnsley's BME community.

Overall Recommendation

Overcoming Language Barriers – increasing Cultural Awareness

This issue ran through every workshop and many people agreed that with improved written and verbal

communication a number of problems, issues and concerns could be more easily overcome.

- i) There needs to be a commitment from partners for written material to be more available in community languages.
- ii) There also needs to be a more coordinated and accessible translation & interpretation service which is recognised by services and users alike.
- iii) Alongside this there needs to be adequate accessible Basic English classes available.

In addition to improving communication there needs to be an improvement in cultural awareness. It is therefore recommended that

- 1) Major Service Providers in Barnsley such as the Council, College, Primary Care Trust, Police etc. commit to a programme of raising cultural awareness within their organisation.**

2) BBEMI to lead and work with its partners at One Barnsley level to establish and promote an accessible translation & interpretation service

3) BBEMI to work with training providers in the region to arrange and promote accessible Basic English classes for Barnsley's BME community.

Recommendations from the Education Workshop

4) Ensure procedures are in place to deal with racial incidents and associated bullying within schools to promote a culture of zero tolerance.

BBEMI in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership should ensure that all schools have robust systems in place to help stop racial incidents and bullying. These systems must be successfully communicated to the BME and wider community to enable enforcement.

5) Provide after school study support for the BME community at appropriate venues.

Similar to study support networks around the borough, it is recommended that a similar network should be established within the BME community. This will offer the opportunity for children and young people to receive support in their school work in a relaxed setting which will help to improve attainment. It will also be of positive benefit to parents who support the network.

6) Improve the effectiveness in promoting employment opportunity events to the BME community, to ensure the transition from education to employment is both clear and accessible.

This issue is explored in more depth in the Jobs and Economy section.

Recommendations from the Health and well being Workshop

7) Improve accessibility to health services for the BME community by employing an intermediary BME lay health worker

The conference raised issues around accessing health services. Some services were unaware of cultural issues, and language barriers and confidence issues were also apparent.

In order to overcome these issues, it is recommended that BBEMI work with Fit for the Future to employ a worker to act as intermediary. This post would work with the suggested Community Health Champions programme to provide a well known approachable individual to work with members of the BME community to help them access the services they require. This person would also work with the range of health services to improve the services' cultural awareness to more adequately cater for the needs of Barnsley's BME community.

8) Improve use of Leisure facilities by arranging more cultural specific events.

As a response to some of the issues raised around leisure facilities, it is recommended that BBEMI works the Cultural Consortium, Barnsley Sports and Active

Recreation Partnership (BSARP) and with larger leisure providers such as Barnsley Premier Leisure to organise cultural awareness sessions. This may involve more women-only exercise sessions with appropriate location and instructors.

9) Improve accessibility by encouraging transport tailored to the needs of the BME community.

In response to the issues and barriers around the accessibility of public transport and taxis it is recommended that BBEMI work with the Partnership for Transport, licensing board, private taxi providers and Barnsley Dial-a-ride to improve mainstream, private and community transport. It is also recommended to establish the viability of a preferred transport service. This will provide a trusted service for members of Barnsley's BME community aware of the needs of passengers.

Recommendations from the Crime, Community Safety and Policing Workshop

10) Provide a consultative Crime and Community Safety forum for the BME community.

Much like the Crime and Community Safety forums at the Area Forum level, it is recommended that BBEMI and South Yorkshire Police look at establishing a Crime and Community Safety sub-group for the BME community. This will allow crime and community safety issues to be aired in an appropriate environment which can then be tackled with corresponding action.

With a forum in place it is imperative that issues from this forum are actioned. A protocol for disseminating this information to each area based Crime and Community Safety Forums is therefore also needed.

11) All agencies to work with local media to share good news stories and build positive relationship

Although perhaps most difficult to action, there was a general feel that the negative portrayal of the BME community in the media needs to be challenged. It is therefore recommended that BBEMI and its constituent groups, in conjunction with One Barnsley's Communications Group, sends positive message through the local media wherever possible to raise the profile of

the BME community in Barnsley and help to overcome negative press.

BBEMI should also try to foster a direct relationship with the local press in order to assist with overcoming negative images in the media.

Recommendations from the Housing and the Environment Workshop

12) To increase representation on Housing Boards and ensure consultation with the BME community

From the housing and environment workshop, by far the strongest issue was lack of representation on decision making boards. With a desire for a multi-cultural Barnsley, members thought it necessary for high level decisions on housing to involve appropriate consultation with the BME community to ensure their aspirations are achieved. It is therefore recommended that Berneslai Homes, the Tenants and Residents Federation and BBEMI look at representation of BME representatives on its highest level board.

Recommendations from the Jobs and the Economy Workshop

13) To provide advice and guidance more adequately tailored to the needs of the BME community to enable them to access jobs and training.

Action Teams for Jobs, through Job Centre Plus and Individual Opportunities Advisors (IOAs) at Barnsley Development Agency have historically targeted certain geographical areas, providing support to that community to enable residents to return to work. This helped overcome barriers associated with how the service had previously been delivered to its targeted clientele.

It is recommended that a similar method be established which rather than targeting geographical communities will target the BME community. This will provide support which is culturally aware and can respond more ably to the needs of the BME community who are looking for work or training.

What happens now?

As mentioned earlier it is imperative that this conference leads to action. There are a number of mechanisms that this report and information gained at the event will feed into for action.

1. Executive Corporate Equality Group

This group brings together members leading on equality from each directorate of the council. The discussion of this conference's findings and this report will enable champions of equality in each area of the council to be fully aware of issues brought to light at the event. With this evidence they will be able to help to progress some of the recommendations within different directorates of the council.

2. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership (EDIP)

EDIP advises the Local Strategic Partnership (One Barnsley) on cross cutting Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity issues. It brings together agencies and

organisations working to support this agenda. EDIP will be able to ensure that the recommendations by partners wider than the council are noted and can be pursued by relevant partners.

3. Wider Consultation with relevant officers

In order to ensure the messages from the report reach the correct officer or agency for action, the report will be circulated directly for comments and responses.

From this it is hope that a programme of action in response to the recommendations will be developed. BBEMI with partners will work to implement recommendations to improve service delivery for the BME community,

With this focus on delivery being extremely important, conference participants requested that further conferences be held on at least an annual basis. Here progress will be monitored and future priorities be established.